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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000063

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/06/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ'S SUNNI VP DISCUSSES BAGHDAD SECURITY PLAN,
MODERATE FRONT, SADDAM AND IRAN

REF: A. A) BAGHDAD 0008

[B](#). B) 2006 BAGHDAD 4652

[C](#). C) 2006 BAGHDAD 4763

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: In a January 4 meeting with Iraq's Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi (Iraqi Islamic Party) IIP), the Ambassador briefed him on the new Baghdad security plan and solicited the VP's support. Al-Hashemi welcomed a new plan to curb Baghdad violence, requested Shia and Sunni balance within the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) manning checkpoints, and agreed that an increased number of MNF-I troops are needed in order for the plan to succeed. Discussing a possible cabinet change, the VP said that Prime Minister Maliki has not approached him about changing any of Tawafuq's (Sunni Coalition) Ministers or their Deputy Prime Minister. Al-Hashemi stressed that before Tawafuq agrees to change its Ministers, the Minister of Defense, Abdul Qadir Mohammed al-Mufriji, (Sunni) Independent) Tawafuq) must be replaced with another Tawafuq candidate. The VP criticized the way the GOI executed Saddam and expressed concern that because of their actions the reconciliation project is now "dead." On the moderate front, al-Hashemi said that during his recent trip to Sulaymaniyah with President Talabani he had agreed to change IIP's conditions (reftel) to a program for the coalition to address. However, the VP warned, the PM has been unable to convince Dawa to support the coalition. The Ambassador and VP discussed how to address the issue of GOI officials with close ties to foreign countries, such as Iran, with the VP recommending that the GOI "start from scratch" and hold new elections. End Summary.

The Baghdad Security Plan: Al-Hashemi Offers Support

[1](#)2. (S) The Ambassador outlined the chief components of the new Baghdad Security Plan and called on the VP to support the PM and this plan. First, Coalition Forces (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) will pursue anyone who breaks the law. There will be no sanctuary anywhere in greater Baghdad, the Ambassador emphasized. Second, Baghdad will be divided into nine districts overseen by two deputy commanders reporting directly to a military commander with full authority operating independently of political pressures. Finally, the security plan will be accompanied by economic and services plan. In order to secure Baghdad, the Ambassador said, the Iraqi Army (IA) will bring three extra brigades to Baghdad, two from northern Iraq and one from the South, working alongside an extra US brigade. The coalition will support by bringing more forces into Iraq and committing additional forces to be brought in if needed. The details will be worked out in the coming days.

[1](#)3. (S) The VP responded that National Security Advisor

Muwafuq Rubai'e had already presented the plan to him. "I gave him four pages of comments," the VP said, and also "sent a copy to General Casey." He reiterated previous concerns about Shia-Sunni balance within the ISF, especially at checkpoints. The Deputy Commander in Karkh should be from the Ministry of Defense, al-Hashemi stated, and the Deputy Commander in Rasafa should be from Ministry of Interior. The VP agreed that more forces, both Coalition and Iraqi, would be needed to solve Baghdad's security crisis.

Cabinet Reshuffle: Minister of Defense Needs to Be Replaced

¶4. (C) The Ambassador asked about the proposed cabinet change, noting that the PM said Tawafuq wants to change three ministries but has not provided any substitutions. The VP scoffed, saying that the PM wants those changes, not Tawafuq. The PM will not tell us who he wants changed, al-Hashemi complained, and is choosing to form a committee to review the issue. One of the changes the PM wants to make, he continued, is to move Tawafuq's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Rafi'a al-Issawi, to Minister of Health (MoH). The Ambassador noted that this is a great opportunity for Tawafuq, since that ministry has been "destroyed" by its current Sadrist Minister and al-Issawi will be "a hero" for fixing it. The VP commented that there are "too many guns and killers" at the MoH and that key people need to be removed or else al-Issawi "will be killed" by the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) and Moqtada al-Sadr supporters working there.

¶5. (C) The VP noted that before Tawafuq agrees to any ministerial changes, Minister of Defense Abdul Qadir al-Mufriji must be replaced. Tawafuq has sent a clear

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message to al-Mufirji, al-Hashemi said, that he should resign. "We were forced by the Shia coalition" to place an independent Sunni in this position, the VP lamented. However, al-Hashemi said, the PM is the boss, the Commander-in-Chief, and he is not independent. The Minister of Defense makes sectarian issues worse by "simply implementing the PM's ideas," al-Hashemi stressed. His replacement, therefore, should come from Tawafuq. The Ambassador noted that the PM has not decided the extent of his cabinet change and that the Minister of Defense might not be replaced. Besides, the Ambassador noted, our military colleagues say al-Mufriji has a good reputation as an honest and non-sectarian minister.

Saddam's Execution: Reconciliation "Dead" VP Warns

¶6. (S) Turning to Saddam's execution, the VP stated that nobody had consulted with President Talabani, although he noted that he had sent Rubaie a letter prior to the execution. Al-Hashemi commented that Talabani believed his signature was not required because of a legal statute which states high tribunal sentences cannot be changed. The Ambassador noted he had been told the same thing, and that he had recommended that the PM press the Chief Justice for a written opinion concurring with this assessment. Al-Hashemi said he had also suggested that a judge put in writing his opinion that a Presidential decree was unnecessary.

¶7. (S) The Ambassador then asked the VP whether the PM or his advisors had approached him before the execution. The VP said that he had not been consulted, although prior to the execution he sent a letter to both the PM and Rubai'e sharing concerns raised by Salah ad Din (SaD) officials during a December 28 meeting (Ref A). The letter, the VP continued, requested three days notice to address security issues in SaD, Saddam's home province, and recommended that the GOI release Saddam's remains to the SaD Governor for burial. According to the VP, Rubai'e responded that it would not be

possible to provide three days notice since the PM is keeping all details "a secret until the last minute." Rubai'e further stated, al-Hashemi said, that he would try to give notice at least one hour before the event.

¶8. (S) In addition to the legal issues and returning Saddam's remains to SaD, the VP said he also spoke to the PM about rushing through the execution during Eid. According to al-Hashemi, the PM responded that it was "your Eid, not mine," and noted that the religious leaders had confirmed that if Saddam was executed before sunrise it would not occur during Eid. (Note: Saddam was executed approximately one hour before sunrise on December 30, the day which Sunni Muslims began celebrating Eid al-Adha. End Note). The VP noted that Saddam was executed "as a Sunni, not as a dictator," and called the execution "the revenge of the Dawa party." He further commented that reconciliation "was dead" because of how the execution occurred.

¶9. (S) The Ambassador agreed that many people are upset with how the execution occurred. When asked why the USG had released Saddam Hussein when the GOI had not resolved some of these issues, the Ambassador responded that Iraq had legal custody of Saddam, although at GOI's request we had physical custody. "We voiced our concerns," the Ambassador said, but in the end the PM made the final decision. Based on Saddam's execution, the VP suggested that MNF-I encourage the PM to postpone the remaining two executions until reconciliation has concluded.

Moderate Front: IIP Relents on Conditions; Dawa will not join

¶10. (C) The Ambassador noted that efforts to form a moderate front have stalled and asked the VP where IIP stands on their list of demands which must be met before joining the coalition. The VP replied that while visiting Sulaymaniyah with President Talabani, IIP agreed to change their conditions (Ref B) to an agenda the moderate front would address. In fact, al-Hashemi said, IIP had issued an amended statement to this effect and had passed it to Rowsch Shaways (former Iraqi Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister) Kurd) KDP) and current Vice President Adil Abdul Mehdi (SCIRI). They took the amended statement to the PM, al-Hashemi said. The problem, the VP continued, is that the PM has been unable to convince Dawa to join the coalition. According to the VP, the PM has said that as a political party leader he cannot join the coalition, but as the PM he could form a group with the Presidency Council (the President

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and two VPs) and the Council of Representatives (CoR) speaker, Mahmoud Mashadani. The Ambassador responded that it would be better if the coalition formed around political bloc leaders. There could be constitutional concerns if a new alliance between official positions forms, the Ambassador cautioned. The VP said that once Abdul Mehdi returns to Baghdad he is willing to discuss the issue again.

On Iranian Influence in the GOI: VP suggests new elections

¶11. (S) On the Iranian detainees, the Ambassador commented that President Talabani called these people his "guests," but he did not even know who they are, the Ambassador said. The VP responded that Iran's activities within Iraq and their connections to GOI officials have not been a secret. "I have been warning about Iran's influence for some time," he said. The VP offered his appreciation for General Caldwell's presentation (Ref C), but noted the General only shared "things I already knew." The Ambassador asked the VP what should be done with GOI leaders who are working with Quds Force operatives. The VP replied that the GOI needs "to start from scratch," with new elections and needs to

strengthen a weak central government. While affirming his commitment to democracy and rule of law, the VP noted that there are "problems" with some of the political partners. The VP further commented that Iran's reach extends beyond SCIRI, Badr and the Sadrists. He explained his belief that CoR Speaker Mahmoud Mashadani (Tawafuq) is also influenced by the Iranians and noted that several Sunni insurgent and resistance groups have received Iranian support.

¶12. (S) Al-Hashemi asked the Ambassador about the GOI's actions once MNF-I released the detainees. The Ambassador commented that while he shares concerns about Iranian influence, the GOI took some positive steps during this incident. First, he said, once MNF-I released the detainees, the GOI ordered them to leave Iraq and escorted them to the Iranian border. Second, the MFA issued a statement announcing their departure and stated publicly that "their activities had been inconsistent with their diplomatic status." Third, the GOI has requested an updated list of Iranian diplomats in Iraq so that in the future it will be easier to verify diplomatic status. Finally, the GOI is sending a delegation to Iran, most likely led by Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, to discuss the incident and its implications. The Ambassador asked why the VP and IIP have not made a bigger deal about the issue. The VP responded that IIP is more concerned about reconciliation and that he fears making a big deal about the Iranians and their ties with other GOI leaders will hinder the reconciliation effort. KHALILZAD